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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1173  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2307  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9329  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7584  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5409  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3744  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5334  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0195  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0149  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4456  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9892  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 7179  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0190  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0037  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000062

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2020

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: ELECTIONS UPDATE NO. 14 - ANNOUNCEMENT  
OF RETURNS SLOW

REF: A. COLOMBO 61  
[1](#)B. COLOMBO 59  
[1](#)C. COLOMBO 57  
[1](#)D. COLOMBO 53  
[1](#)E. COLOMBO 51  
[1](#)F. COLOMBO 48  
[1](#)G. COLOMBO 47  
[1](#)H. COLOMBO 46  
[1](#)I. COLOMBO 45  
[1](#)J. COLOMBO 40  
[1](#)K. COLOMBO 36  
[1](#)L. COLOMBO 27

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[1](#)M. COLOMBO 21  
[1](#)N. COLOMBO 11  
[1](#)O. COLOMBO 7  
[1](#)P. COLOMBO 2  
[1](#)Q. 09 COLOMBO 1152  
[1](#)R. 09 COLOMBO 1145  
[1](#)S. 09 COLOMBO 1139

Classified By: AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

BALLOT COUNTING SLOW

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[1](#)1. (C) (Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) Ballot counting has been slow overnight. Postal ballots were not completed until around 2:30 AM local time, and by 9:00 AM local time, only about 20 per cent of the total ballots had been counted, when in past elections over 50 per cent would be complete at that point. At this rate we do not expect final results until later in the day.

OUTCOME STILL UNCLEAR

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[1](#)2. (C) (Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) Postal (absentee)

ballots went to Rajapaksa, with 66 per cent of those cast. The postal votes are a small portion of the total vote, and the bulk of those voters are government employees and appointees who might naturally vote for the incumbent. Still, many observers expected this postal vote to be closer.

With regard to the total number of regular votes, approximately 20 per cent had been counted by 9:00 AM, with approximately 60 per cent are in favor of Rajapaksa and 40 per cent for Fonseka. Past practice, however, has been for the government to release early in the counting the results of electorates expected to favor of the incumbent, and it is still difficult to predict the final outcome. At this point, we have not received any reports of ballot-box stuffing or other attempts to tamper with the results. Domestic monitoring organizations also have received no reports of irregularities at ballot counting stations.

FONSEKA HOLED UP IN HOTEL,  
MILITARY SURROUNDING HIM  
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13. (C) (Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) Post contacts and media are reporting that Fonseka is staying at the Cinnamon Lakeside Hotel in Colombo with a number of key campaign officials. Over 100 military troops have cordoned off the hotel and part of the street it faces, searching all vehicles going in and out. PolOff spoke to UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe at about 8:00 AM local time. Ranil said the government was telling them the soldiers outside the hotel were for Fonseka's protection, but other Post contacts report being told by the government they are there to prevent Fonseka from staging a coup. Ranil said he had been negotiating with the government to move Fonseka from the

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hotel to his office. Ranil reported that he and other party leaders had been coming and going from the hotel, and that the security appears to be focused on Fonseka himself. Ranil said he could not comment on any early results, as he had been caught up in these negotiations.

14. (C) (Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) PD contacts have reported many press personnel have had police or military guards posted outside their offices since early this morning local time. Post employees coming in to the Chancery early this morning saw very few police or military on the streets, outside of the contingent at Fonseka's hotel.

MONITORS CONFIRM LIMITED  
ELECTION DAY VIOLENCE  
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15. (C) (Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) Both the Campaign for Free and Fair Elections (CaFFE) and the People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) have issued preliminary reports on election-day incidents, stating that the voting was peaceful and relatively free of violence. They cited pre-dawn incidents in Jaffna for suppressing voter turnout there, and complained about the reporting by state media while polls were still open of Fonseka's failure to vote.

COMMENT  
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16. (C) (Rel to UK, CAN, AUS, SWITZ.) The heavy tilt of early returns for Rajapaksa is not surprising, given that Sri Lankan governments tend to release first the numbers for the districts expected to support the incumbent. With only about 20 percent of the results announced so far, it is too early to predict the outcome. Trends will become clearly when figures for the Western province -- which accounts for approximately a third of the population, including the capital Colombo -- become available later in the day. The stationing of troops outside Fonseka's hotel is disconcerting, but deploying military within Colombo is not uncommon, and at this point we are interpreting it as a political distraction.

